

Hans Rudolf Velten, Joseph Imorde (eds.)
Fantasy Aesthetics

The Middle Ages and Popular Culture | Volume 4

Editorial

Our present imaginations and visualizations of the Middle Ages are not at all consistent. They emerge from varying and shifting social and cultural conditions and appear within specific frames of reception. Thus, scientific discourses are grounded on historical records and are disseminated by official institutions such as universities, academies, scientific publishers, and museums. They stand in sharp contrast to the heterogeneous field of popular discourses and practices including Historical or Fantasy Novels, Graphic Novels, magazines, movies, TV-series, roleplaying/LARP, or medieval(istic) festivals. However, public response to, and social impact of these popular forms of Medievalism generally prevail over academic discourse.

Therefore, the systematic inclusion of popular medievalism in Medieval Studies seems paramount for at least two reasons. The first concerns the liability of popular discourses for ideological malpractice: political messages of high impact are often associated with popular appropriations of medieval themes and topics, e.g. the adoption of fictional characters as historical figures and vice versa. The second reason involves popular medievalism's contributions to cultural self-conception: adaptations and transformations of medieval myths, figures or artifacts lend themselves to alternative concepts of reality and/or identity, thus gaining significance as critical and aesthetical commentary on present conditions.

Analyzing popular discourses of the Middle Ages and making them critically accessible not only enables Medieval Studies to engage with contemporary political issues, but also encourages closer collaboration with other disciplines. The academic book series **The Middle Ages and Popular Culture** provides a platform for studies on popular medievalism of all eras.

The series is edited by Robert Schöller and Hans Rudolf Velten (managerial responsibility), Michael Dallapiazza, Judith Klinger and Matthias Däumer.

Hans Rudolf Velten is a professor of Medieval German literature and language at Universität Siegen. He is currently principal investigator in the research program (SFB) "Transformationen des Populären" and has widely published in the fields of vernacular medieval literature and cultural theory. His research interests are in literature and culture of the late middle ages and early modern period, historical anthropology, theater history of the 15th and 16th centuries, and medievalism.

Joseph Imorde was a professor of art history at Universität Siegen until 2021 and is a principal investigator in the research program (SFB) "Transformationen des Populären". Since 2022 he has been a professor of art history and vice president at the Kunsthochschule Weißensee in Berlin. His research centers on the historiography of art history, archaeology, anthropology, and ethnography.

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Visualizing Myth and Middle Ages, 1880-2020

Assisted by Lukas Schrage

[transcript]

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